



MassWildlife
LANDOWNER
Incentive Program

NEWSLETTER OF THE MASSACHUSETTS DIVISION OF FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE

Summer 2005 Newsletter: Vol. 1 No. 1



LIP is a grant program administered by the Department of the Interior's United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and implemented through state natural resources agencies.



MassHabitat Partnership

Sharing the Cost
Sharing the Habitat

THE ISSUES

Newsletter

Welcome to the first issue of MassHabitat. This newsletter will be distributed biannually in the Summer and Winter. If you would like to showcase your project or a specific issue highlighted in the newsletter please contact the LIP Coordinator.

Focus

During this first round of grants our focus was on early successional habitat such as grasslands and scrub/shrub land, shorebird breeding areas, NHESP priority natural communities and areas with At-Risk-Species.

Feature Article:

In each newsletter the MassWildlife Landowner Incentive program will highlight a species-at risk or habitat type of importance. In the first issue we have chosen the bog turtle. Currently, LIP is funding 3 projects in western Massachusetts working on enhancing bog turtle habitat through the removal of invasive plants and the removal of woody plants to keep the habitat open. Please see page 2 for more information about bog turtles and their natural habitat in Massachusetts.

Faces of Conservation

In the Winter Newsletter we will try to talk with folks that are currently working under a LIP grant and show what they have been doing with the funding.

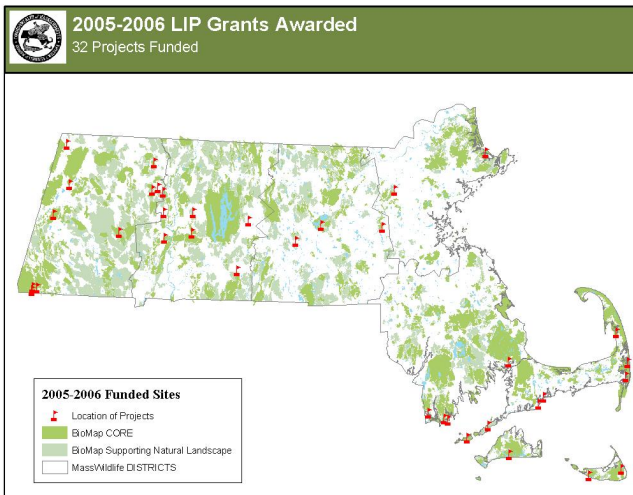
Dates Reminders

This years grant application period will be opened in late October. Please refer to the webpage often for updated application materials and assistance.

Preview of the First Year for MassWildlife's Partnership with Private Landowners



In its first year of implementation MassWildlife's Landowner Incentive Program (LIP) received **72** applications for Species-at-risk habitat improvement/restoration on private lands. Of these 72 applications, **32** were selected for funding in FY2006. MassWildlife will be partnering with these private landowners on about **2800** acres funding projects for about **\$550,000**. (cont. on page 2)



USFWS

In the Commonwealth, many plants, animals and habitat types are in serious decline. Since much of the land in our state is privately owned it is important to protect our natural resources through partnerships with willing landowners.

The Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife Natural Heritage Program (NHP) and Ecological Restoration Program (ERP) work to protect priority habitats of rare wildlife such as the New England cottontail, Plymouth Red-belly cooter, Bog turtle, Blue-spotted salamander, Grassland birds and other animals that have seen a decline in their habitat over the years.

To address the conservation of fish and wildlife on private lands, congress allocated funds for a nation-wide Landowner Incentive Program (LIP). These funds were placed under the command of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to support State fish and wildlife agencies.

This years grants were distributed all over Massachusetts ranging from Cape Cod and the Islands to the furthest western towns. In future years we are looking to expand upon the areas that we are already working in and look forward to working with landowners in areas that we have not been in yet.

Project habitats ranged from beaches for shorebird breeding habitat protection to the grassland-bird breeding habitat maintenance.



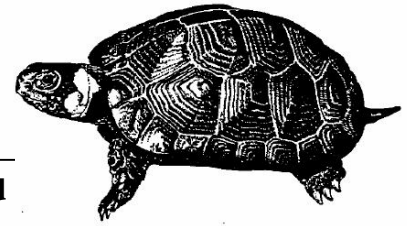
Scott Melvin of MassWildlife works with researchers from Mass Audubon on their Least Tern colony protection Project.

Why Participate in LIP?

Privately owned lands provide important fish and wildlife habitat in Massachusetts. Over 80% of the landbase in the Commonwealth is privately owned. Most rare species in Massachusetts are found on privately owned lands. Restoring and maintaining habitat on these lands is essential because so many species depend upon them for survival. Species conservation goals cannot be fully achieved by focusing effort solely on public lands.

Feature Article on LIP species:

Massachusetts Bog Turtles



Bog Turtle *Clemmys muhlenbergii*, State Endangered, Federal Threatened

Habitats: Shrub Swamps; Marshes, Wet Meadows and Fens

Conservation Concern: Federal List; State List; Globally Rare

Species Description

The Bog Turtle is a small (3 to 4 inch, 7.6 to 10 cm) turtle with a mahogany, dull brown or black oblong carapace, with faint yellowish or reddish blotches centered in each scute. The plastron is black, irregularly marked with yellow. The most striking feature is a large, bright orange spot behind each ear on the otherwise-black head. The neck is brown and the tail and legs are brownish-yellow or dark brown. In males, the tail is longer and thicker than in females, and the plastron is more concave.

Distribution and Abundance

There are three documented current occurrences of Bog Turtle in Massachusetts (NHESP database, accessed December, 2004). NHESP does not release any details about the locations of some rare species, including Bog Turtles, because they are particularly susceptible to collection by humans. One small region of the western part of the state comprises the extent of Bog Turtle occurrences in Massachusetts.

Habitat Description

Bog Turtles in Massachusetts inhabit low-lying, open, calcareous wetlands, particularly fens. Within these wetlands, the turtles choose small patches of optimal habitat – open, early-successional stages of wet meadows, surrounded by freshwater marsh or wooded swamp. Over time, as the wetlands succeed to shrubbier habitats or are flooded by beaver to form areas of open water, Bog Turtles must move to find new patches of optimal habitat.

Threats

Since Massachusetts lies on the northern periphery of Bog Turtle range, they have apparently always been uncommon in the state. In addition, low reproductive productivity, low juvenile survivorship, and a long period to sexual maturity all inhibit the long-term viability of small, isolated populations of Bog Turtle. In Massachusetts, the species is threatened by the destruction and disruption of suitable wetlands by alterations in groundwater, nonpoint source pollution, invasion by exotic invasive plants, off-road vehicle traffic, and illegal filling or dredging of wetlands. Range-wide, the species is threatened by collection for the pet trade.

Other species benefiting from Habitat Restoration

The funding of bog turtle habitat restoration in western Massachusetts will not only help federally listed bog turtles, but other wildlife as well. Other turtles such as the Spotted Turtle and Blanding's Turtle as well as birds such as Green herons, American black ducks and other water birds will also benefit from management activities. A mixture of herbaceous plants including Skunk cabbage, various ferns (especially Cinnamon fern, Sensitive fern, and Royal fern), sedges, Sphagnum moss, and Common Arrowhead among other plants also would benefit.



Please look for this years LIP Grant announcement in late October

www.mass.gov/dfwele/dfw/dfw_lip.htm

Massachusetts Endangered Species Act changes

Massachusetts Natural Heritage Program has over 435 species on our threatened, endangered and special concern list. On July 1, 2005 a comprehensive set of regulatory improvements to MESA took effect. This is the first major revision of the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act regulations since they were first published in 1992.

The new regulations:

- clarify filing requirements and procedures
- set timelines for agency response
- establish filing fees
- expand and add definitions
- formalize the appeal process for agency decisions

Integral to the changes is the implementation of a *fee structure* to pay for the services provided. A clear distinction is made between different types of MESA review: information requests, project reviews, and conservation and management permits. The fees will be deposited into the Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Fund to support the NHESP since the program receives no General Fund or other appropriation support.

For more information: <http://www.mass.gov/dfwele/dfw/nhESP/nhenvmesa.htm>.

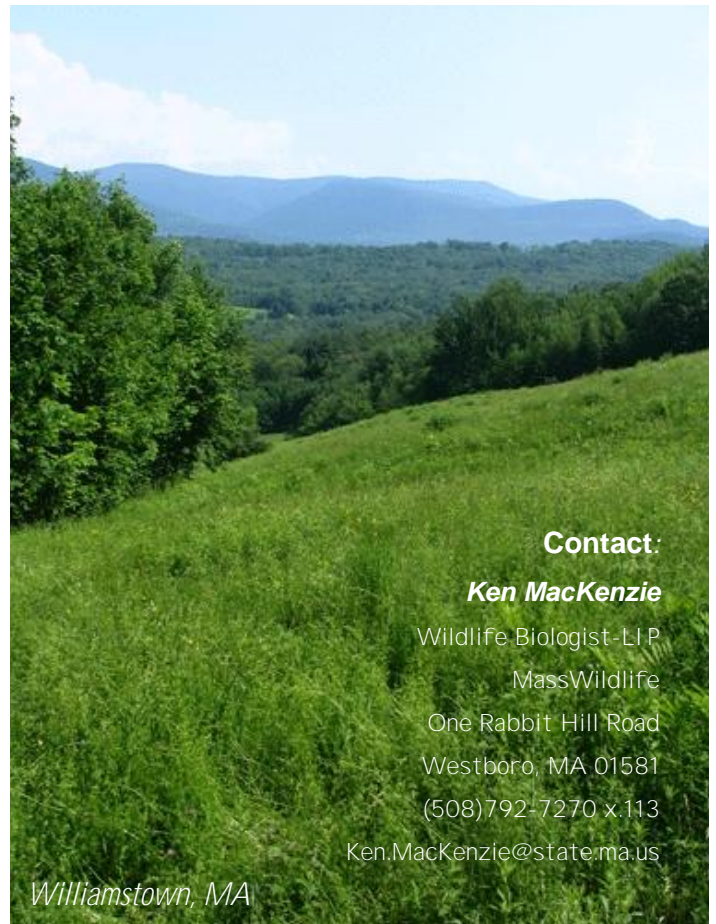
LIP Preview: (continued from the front page)

- Of the 32 projects selected: **13 land trusts**, **9 conservation organizations**, **1 sportsmen's club** and **9 other private landowners**.
- Of the 32 projects: **1167 acres** in *coastal habitats*, **865.5 acres** in *early successional upland*, **58.5 acres** in *early successional wetlands*, **325.5 acres** in *grasslands* and **314.5 acres** in *Pitch pine-Scrub oak forest*.
- Of the projects selected: **78%** of the projects had *permanent protection*, **9%** were enrolled in *Chapter 61* and **13%** had *no conservation protection*. The projects without land protection were required to sign a land covenant for **10 years** requiring the landowner to keep the project area as wildlife habitat.
- Of the projects selected: **94%** applied for manual restoration, **72%** applied for an invasive/exotic plant removal, **16%** applied for a prescribed burn and **25%** applied for the seeding or planting in their project area.
- The 2005-2006 Massachusetts LIP Projects will conserve 2800 acres of habitat benefiting over **80 At-risk species**.

Interested in LIP?

What Makes a Good LIP Project?

1. You must be a private landowner
(Public owned lands are not eligible).
2. There will be a preference for lands which occur in or close to BioMap Core and Supporting Natural Landscapes or projects in Priority Habitat identified by the Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program.
3. State or federally listed plants or animals occur on or in the near vicinity of the proposed LIP project.
4. The proposed project will enhance or restore habitat for state or federally listed plants or animals.
5. A stewardship or management plan exists for the proposed project area. LIP or other conservation organizations can assist eligible landowners with recommendations on a limited basis.
6. If the proposed project area is not permanently protected, you are willing to sign a landowner agreement and agree to keep the LIP-funded habitat enhancement or restoration project as wildlife habitat for length of time based on the amount of funding. This requires that **ONLY** the area of the property managed with LIP funding be kept as wildlife habitat for species-at-risk.
7. If you intend to apply for over \$50,000.00, the land **MUST** be permanently protected by a conservation restriction or easement.
8. *MassWildlife* promotes cost-share projects that resourcefully and creatively seek to manage wildlife habitat that conserves natural communities and species-at-risk. You must be willing to commit a portion of total project costs in dollars or effort.



To assist in determining if your project is compatible with LIP's goals, please review the following:

LIP Goals

- **Identify and reclaim** appropriate sites for management of declining habitats (especially open land: old field and early-successional forest, wetlands, coastal habitat and pine barrens).
- **Manage and control** exotic and invasive plants.
- **Enhance wildlife habitat** for species-at-risk. A species-at-risk is defined for LIP as any fish or wildlife species that is federally or state listed as threatened or endangered, is a candidate for listing as threatened or endangered, or is listed on the NHESP Official State Rare Species List.
- Provide **technical and financial assistance** and guidance to landowners on how to manage their property for wildlife.



For more Info, log on to:
http://www.mass.gov/dfwele/dfw/dfw_lip.htm